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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER PIERRE-LOUIS ON HAITI'S URGENT
NEEDS, BUILDING A GOVERNMENT AND WORKING WITH PREVAL

REF: PAP 1377

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JANET A. SANDERSON, REASON 1.4(B) AND (D.)

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. HAITIAN PRIME MINISTER MICHELE PIERRE-LOUIS (MPL) GAVE ME A CAUTIOUSLY UPBEAT ASSESSMENT OF HER FIRST MONTH IN OFFICE DURING OUR BREAKFAST MEETING OCTOBER 2. SHE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE ASSISTANCE HAITI HAS RECEIVED IN THE WAKE OF THE HURRICANES, AND FOR US SUPPORT IN GENERAL. SHE IS CONCERNED THAT THE EXTENT OF THE DEVASTATION IS SUCH THAT THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT COPE WITHOUT A MASSIVE INFLUX OF MORE AID. SHE INTENDS TO TRAVEL TO THE US AS SOON AS CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOW HER TO DO SO TO UNDERSCORE THE IMPORTANCE SHE ATTACHES TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. SHE IS PLEASED BY HER RECEPTION DURING VISITS TO HURRICANE-STRIKEN AREAS AND HAS COME AWAY MORE CONVINCED THAN EVER OF THE NEED MOVE QUICKLY ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND FLOOD CONTROL ISSUES. PIERRE-LOUIS IS ALSO GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT HAITI'S ABILITY TO FEED ITSELF AND THE IMPACT THAT FOOD

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SECURITY ISSUES COULD HAVE ON THE NATIONS FUTURE. SHE WELCOMES OUR SUPPORT IN THESE AREAS. THE PRIME MINISTER IS SLOWLY CARVING OUT A RELATIONSHIP WITH PREVAL, ALTHOUGH HE CONTINUES TO MONOPOLIZE HER CALENDAR. SHE CHARACTERIZES HER RELATIONSHIP WITH PARLIAMENT AS GOOD, DESPITE SOME POSTURING ON BOTH SIDES. SHOCKED BY THE EXTENT OF MISUSE OF PUBLIC TREASURY FUNDS, BOTH IN THE PRIME MINISTRY AND IN THE GOVERNMENT, PIERRE LOUIS IS CHANGING GOH REGULATIONS ON TRAVEL AND CAR RENTALS.

12. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT CONTINUED. OUR SENSE THAT PIERRE LOUIS IS INDEED OFF TO A GOOD START AND HAS WON CAUTIOUS APPROVAL OF HAITI'S SNARKY POLITICAL CLASSES. THAT SUPPORT COULD WELL BE FLEETING, GIVEN THE INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS OF MANY OF HAITI'S POLITICIANS TO PUT ASIDE THEIR OWN PERSONAL AND POLITICAL AGENDAS FOR THE NATION'S GOOD. RIGHTLY OR WRONG, MICHELE PIERRE LOUIS WILL BEAR THE BRUNT OF ANY PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION WITH PACE AND SCOPE OF THE GOVERNMENTS HURRICANE RELIEF/RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT, AN EFFORT THAT APPEARS TO US TO BE FAR BEYOND ITS CURRENT CAPABILITIES. END COMMENT AND SUMMARY.

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13. (C) OVER BREAKFAST OCTOBER 2, HAITIAN PRIME MINISTER

MICHELE PIERRE LOUIS (MPL) GAVE ME A CAUTIOUSLY POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF HER FIRST MONTH IN OFFICE. WHILE SHE IS PLEASED WITH THE SUPPORT THAT SHE HAS RECEIVED, AND EXPRESSED HER PARTICULAR APPRECIATION FOR THE RELIEF AID HAITI RECEIVED FROM THE UNITED STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, SHE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CHALLENGES AHEAD OF HER ARE DAUNTING. INDEED, THEY GO FAR BEYOND WHAT SHE ORIGINALLY THOUGHT SHE WAS TAKING ON WITH THIS JOB. ON ONE HAND, DURING THE LAST MONTH SHE HAS BEEN ABLE TO BUILD ON THE SENSE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY, HOWEVER FLEETING, AND MOBILIZE AND UNIFY THE HAITIAN BODY POLITIC IN SUPPORT OF THOSE AFFECTED BY THE STORMS. ON THE OTHER, HER OWN POLITICAL AGENDA - INCLUDING GOVERNMENT REFORM - HAS BEEN PUSHED ASIDE AND HER OWN FUTURE IS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO HOW WELL THE GOVERNMENT PERFORMS ON RELIEF/RECONSTRUCTION ISSUES. AND SHE KNOWS VERY WELL, SHE TOLD ME, THAT HER HONEYMOON WILL BE A BRIEF ONE. BUT SHE STRESSED, SHE IS DETERMINED TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR HER COUNTRY AS A PUBLIC SERVANT.

14. (C) PIERRE-LOUIS EXPRESSED DEEP REGRET THAT THE CURRENT

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SITUATION HAD STOPPED HER FROM TRAVELING TO WASHINGTON AS SHE HAD HOPED. SHE BELIEVES IT IS IMPORTANT FOR HER TO MAKE A VISIT TO HAITI'S LARGEST PARTER AS SOON AS CIRCUMSTANCES HERE PERMIT AND WELCMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO SCHEDULE THE TRIP WHEN SHEHAS HAD A BIT OF BREATHING ROOM. SHE TOLD ME SHEWOULD PARTICULARLY WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKEA COURTESY ALL ON THE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL SECURTY ADVISOR, AND SECRETARY OF STATE. GIVEN THE EORMOUS INVESTMENT THAT THE USG HAS MADE IN HAITI VER THE YEARS, AND THE CONTINUED SUPPORT THAT AR SO VITAL TO HER GOVERNMENT, SHE SAID, THE US REATIONSHIP IS ONE THAT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO ER ADMINISTRATION'S FUTURE.

15. (C) PIERRE-LOUIS BELIEVES THE GOH MUST BE SEEN TO LEAD. SHE HAS BEEN DEEPLY GRATIFIED BY HER RECEPTION DURING A SERIES OF TRIPS TO HURRICANE-AFFECTED REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY
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NEEDS, BUILDING A GOVERNMENT AND WORKING WITH PREVAL AND HAS PLANNED MORE PRESS CONFERENCES TO TALK ABOUT WHAT THE GOH IS ATTEMPTING TO DO TO PUT THE COUNTRY BACK TOGETHER. HER FIRST TRIP TO GONAIVES, MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AGO, WAS

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WORRISOME. SHE FULLY EXPECTED THAT THE INHABITANTS, MANY OF WHOM ARE STILL IN SHELTERS, WOULD THROW ROCKS AT HER, YET THEY APPLAUDED HER, SHE TOLD ME IN SOME RELIEF. SINCE THAT TRIP, MPL HAS ALSO VISITED THE CENTRAL PLATEAU AND JACMEL AND IS SCHEDULED TO TRAVEL TO THE NORTHWESTERN TOWN OF PORT DE PAIX. THE EXTENT OF THE HURRICANE DESTRUCTION, NOW IN NINE OUT OF TEN DEPARTMENTS OF THE COUNTRY, HAS BEEN OVERWHELMING, THE PM COMMENTED. SHE HAS NO IDEA HOW THE NATION IS GOING TO DEAL WITH THE CLEANUP, MUCH LESS THE REBUILDING, WITH ITS CURRENT RESOURCES.

16. (C) ONE THE PM'S KEY TAKE-AWAYS FROM HER TRIPS THUS FAR IS THAT HAITI MUST ADDRESS ITS ENVIRONMENTAL FAILINGS. NEGLECTED WATERSHED ISSUES AND THE ALMOST TOTAL DEFORESTATION OF THE COUNTRY HAS BROUGHT HAITI TO WHERE IT IS TODAY, WITH MAJOR CITIES FLOODED AND KNEE DEEP IN MUD. PIERRE-LOUIS IS DETERMINED TO MAKE THESE ISSUES A TOP PRIORITY OF HER GOVERNMENT. FURTHERMORE, SHE FLAGGED FOR ME HER CONTINUING CONCERN ABOUT FOOD SECURITY ISSUES AND THE NEED FOR IMMEDIATE JOB CREATION PROGRAMS. GIVEN THE STORMS IMPACT ON THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR - CURRENT ASSESSMENTS PUT THE LOSSES AT

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DOLS 250 MILLION, SHE SAID - HAITI WILL NEED SERIOUS, SUSTAINED, GUARANTEED FOOD AID TO FEED ITS PEOPLE. IF NOT, PIERRE LOUIS SUGGESTED, HAITIANS COULD TAKE TO THE STREETS AGAIN AS THEY DID IN APRIL.

17. (C) I BRIEFED THE PM ON THE PRELIMINARY INFORMATION WE HAVE REGARDING THE CR ALLOCATION OF HURRICANE RELIEF FOR HAITI, NOTING OUR DESIRE TO FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE, AG

REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES. PIERRE LOUIS WELCOMED THESE PLANS AND APPLAUDED OUR FOCUS ON UPPER WATERSHED FLOOD CONTROL AND OTHER DISASTER MITIGATION EFFORTS. SHE SAID THAT THE GOH HAS YET TO PUT A PRICE TAG ON THE COST OF REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION, OBSERVING FRANKLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS, EVEN WITH OUTSIDE HELP, TOTALLY OVERWHELMED BY THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DISASTER. SHE LAMENTED THE FACT THAT IT TAKES MUCH LONGER THAN SHE EVER DREAMED POSSIBLE TO GET ANYTHING DONE HERE. SHE ASKED THAT WE LOOK AT PROVIDING THE GOH WITH ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OFFSET THEIR LACK OF CAPACITY.

18. (C) PIERRE-LOUIS AND PRESIDENT RENE PREVAL ARE NOW WORKING THEIR WAY TO A SOLID RELATIONSHIP. SHE ACKNOWLEDGED

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THAT SHE WAS MOVING CAREFULLY WITH THE PRICKLY PREVAL AND THAT HE CONTINUES TO MONOPOLIZE HER CALENDAR, OFTEN AT THE EXPENSE OF HER OWN AGENDA. PREVAL CALLS HER TO 3-4 HOUR MEETINGS ON LITTLE NOTICE. THAT WILL CHANGE, SHE ASSERTED, TELLING ME THAT SHE WILL DISTANCE HERSELF SLOWLY FROM HIS EMBRACE. TO SUCCEED AS PM, MPL SAID, SHE KNOWS SHE MUST ESTABLISH HERSELF WHILE MAINTAINING SOLID, MUTUALLY CONFIDENT LINKS WITH HER OLD FRIEND.

19. (C) THAT BEING SAID, PIERRE-LOUIS'S LEADERSHIP STYLE DIFFERS SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THAT OF THE PRESIDENT AND SHE INTIMATED THAT SHE FINDS MANAGING THOSE DIFFERENCES A CHALLENGE AT TIMES. SHE SAID THAT SHE SUCCESSFULLY PERSUADED A RELUCTANT PREVAL TO VISIT GONAIVES BY POINTING OUT THAT IT GAVE HIS REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE MORE CREDIBILITY. (SHE ADDED THAT FORMER PM ALEXIS ALSO WEIGHED IN WITH THE PRESIDENT.) COMMENTING ON PREVAL'S WIDELY REPORTED REMARKS TO THE PRESS UPON HIS RETURN FROM UNGA THAT HAITI COULD NOT COUNT ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR HELP, MPL WRYLY SAID THAT SHE WISHED THE PRESIDENT WOULD STICK TO HIS TALKING POINTS AND REVEALED THAT HE DID VET HIS UNGA REMARKS WITH HER. SHE

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CONFIRMED THAT PREVAL DID INDEED TELL THE DIRECTOR OF THE WFP SHEERAN THAT THE WFP PROGRAM IN HAITI WAS A WASTE OF RESOURCES, AS THE UNSRSG HAD RECENTLY CONFIDED TO ME. WHEN CALLED ON IT SUBSEQUENTLY BY THE PM AND HIS OWN STAFF, PREVAL TRIED TO CLAIM THAT THE TRANSLATION OF HIS REMARKS WAS TO BLAME. "I THINK," PIERRE LOUIS NOTED, "THAT WE MAY NEED TO BE A BIT MORE NUANCED IN OUR APPROACH TO OUR FRIENDS." AT A TIME WHEN HAITI NEEDS ALL ITS FRIENDS, I NOTED, PREVAL'S CAVALIER APPROACH TO THE DONORS ISN'T HELPFUL AND HIS REMARKS CANNOT ALL BE PASSED OFF, AS HE OFTEN LIKES TO DO, AS IRONY. PIERRE-LOUIS TOOK THE POINT.

=SECTION 03=====

NEEDS, BUILDING A GOVERNMENT AND WORKING WITH PREVAL
110. (C) PIERRE-LOUIS IS ALSO FINDING HER FOOTING WITH HAITI'S CANTANKEROUS PARLIAMENT. SHE CONFESSED THAT THE BRUISING CONFIRMATION PROCESS HAD BEEN UNEXPECTED AND IN SOME WAYS, HAS BEEN HARD TO PUT BEHIND HER. BUT SHE HAS NO CHOICE AND HAS BEEN COURTING PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH VARYING DEGREES OF SUCCESS. NONETHELESS, THERE IS A LIMIT, SHE SAID. MPL TOLD ME THAT SHE HAD RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE

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SENATE THE PREVIOUS EVENING SUMMONING HER AND FOUR MINISTERS TO PARLIAMENT THAT MORNING TO BRIEF ON CURRENT RELIEF EFFORTS. FINALLY DECIDING THAT SHE COULDN'T DO JUSTICE TO THE SUBJECT WITHOUT SOME PREPARATION, AND POINTING OUT THAT MOST OF THE MINISTERS WOULD BE IN GONAIVES WITH PREVAL THAT DAY ANYWAY, SHE TOLD THE SENATE SHE WAS NOT AVAILABLE. SENATE PRESIDENT KELY BASTIEN ARGUED WITH HER BRIEFLY, BUT SHE SAID SHE DEMANDED AT LEAST 48 HOURS NOTICE OF AN INVITATION TO MEET WITH PARLIAMENT. THE TWO HAVE NOW AGREED THAT SHE WILL GO TO THE SENATE TO DISCUSS GOH HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORTS ON OCTOBER 6.

111. (C) HURRICANES AND PARLIAMENTARIANS ASIDE, PIERRE LOUIS SAID THAT A KEY PRIORITY IS CHANGING THE GOH'S

BUSINESS-AS-USUAL MINDSET. SHE WAS AGHAST, SHE SAID, WHEN SHE MOVED IN TO THE PRIME MINISTRY AND DISCOVERED THAT MORE THAN 350 PEOPLE ARE ON THE PRIME MINISTRY PAYROLL BUT MOST DO NOT SHOW UP FOR WORK. THE PRIMATURE OWNS 80 CARS BUT IN HER FIRST DAYS IN OFFICE, MPL WAS ASKED TO APPROVE THE RENTAL OF 20 MORE, WITH NO INFORMATION ON THE STATUS OF THE EXISTING FLEET. EARLY IN HER FIRST WEEKS IN OFFICE, CROWDS GATHERED

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OUTSIDE THE PRIMATURE EXPECTING THAT SHE, LIKE HER PREDECESSOR, WOULD HAND OUT RENTREE SCOLAIRE (SCHOOL OPENING) FEES. IN THE PAST, THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE HAD SET ASIDE FUNDS FOR THE PM TO DO WITH AS HE WISHED WITH NO FURTHER ACCOUNTING. SHE SENT THE CROWDS TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WHERE THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR SUCH SUPPORT COULD BE VERIFIED. THE PM'S RESIDENCE IS INHABITABLE: THE PUBLIC ROOMS ARE DIRTY AND DAMAGES AND THE TOILETS IN BOTH THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC AREAS ARE BROKEN. THE MISUSE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY BY HER PREDECESSOR CLEARLY DISCOMFITED THE PM.

112. (C) CRITICAL TO HER EFFORT TO REFORM GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, SHE SAID, WILL BE TO REIN IN GOVERNMENT TRAVEL EXPENSES. OFFICIAL TRAVEL AND PERKS ARE OUT OF CONTROL IN THE HAITIAN GOVERNMENT, THE PRIME MINISTER BELIEVES. SHE TOLD ME THAT FOLLOWING HER OWN TRIP TO GONAIVES, HER SECRETARY BROUGHT HER A CHECK FOR HG 20,000 (USD 526). THIS SUM REPRESENTED GOH PER DIEM FOR HER FOUR HOUR VISIT. SHE TORE THE CHECK UP, TELLING HER STAFF THAT MINUSTAH PROVIDED HER TRANSPORT TO THE CITY AND SHE SPENT NO MONEY DURING THE VISIT. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, STATE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY LUC

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JOSEPH EUCHER REQUESTED TRAVEL EXPENSES AND PER DIEM FOR A TRIP TO PARIS FULLY FUNDED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. PIERRE-LOUIS SAID SHE WILL SHORTLY TELL ALL MINISTRIES THAT THE GOH WILL NO LONGER ISSUE BLANKET PER DIEM ORDERS BUT WILL ONLY REIMBURSE EXPENSES. GIVEN THAT MINISTERS ROUTINELY CLAIM DOLS 750/DAY FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL - AND SEE IT AS AN ENTITLEMENT - MPL KNOWS SHE HAS HER WORK CUT OUT FOR HER IN THIS AREA.
SANDERSON